



National Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Houston, TX

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

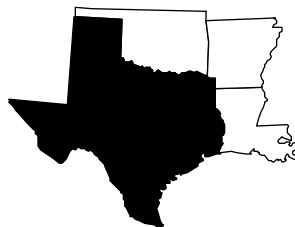
BACKGROUND

EPA selected the City of Houston for a Brownfields Pilot. Houston's economic boom during the 1970s and 1980s contributed to rapid expansion in outlying "greenfields," pulling businesses and residents from the city core and leaving behind a population with relatively low skills as well as large tracts of land that may be environmentally affected. Suspicion of environmental problems encourages industry to locate elsewhere, leaving few incentives for revitalization and delaying numerous redevelopment efforts adjacent to the core area.

OBJECTIVES

Houston's overall brownfields revitalization plans are to increase jobs, establish a permanent organizational infrastructure for future brownfields redevelopment, reuse inner-city property, and bring tax-delinquent properties back to the City's tax rolls. Houston proposes to select a pilot brownfield redevelopment project and evaluate its long-term effect on the economic vitality of the inner city. The EPA grant is being used to identify candidate sites, conduct environmental assessments of selected sites, coordinate and educate stakeholders, develop educational materials, establish a land redevelopment committee, and evaluate financial incentives for the Pilot.

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Houston, Texas

Date of Award:
March 1996

Amount: \$200,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets eight sites in a 20-square mile area in Houston's inner city for redevelopment activities.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields Website at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Established the Land Development Committee (LDC) comprised of multiple stakeholders, including community, local business, and environmental and City representatives to advise the pilot project;
- Developed a set of site criteria for selecting potential brownfields sites for targeted assessment;
- Conducted tours of potential Pilot sites and met with community leaders regarding the identification and selection process; and
- Established a brownfields information phone line, is developing a local brownfields newsletter, and has conducted several presentations throughout the year to establish communication and education among real estate, financial, technical, governmental, and community groups.

The Pilot is:

- Collecting environmental and well water reports on seven properties to determine which additional sites are good candidates for redevelopment and which require additional site characterization; and
- Focusing on four sites in the brownfields inventory; will conduct and evaluate environmental assessments of these sites.

LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the Houston Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- Developing and implementing a model redevelopment process, involving financial incentives, community outreach and education, targeted job opportunities, and the new Texas Voluntary Cleanup Act to help developers and purchasers limit their liability.
- Using the Pilot to leverage other support, including \$175 million in economic development loan resources.